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ABSTRACT

This collection of abstracts is part of a continuing series providing information on recent doctoral dissertations. The 14 titles deal with the following topics: the composing processes of four twelfth-grade students; the relationship of writing quality to syntax; the development of language variables in two modes of writing and their relationship to reading comprehension in the primary grades; factors of style in prose for children; the interests and concerns of adolescents as expressed in their written composition; the relationship between personality type and writing achievement; cognitive egocentrism and written discourse; stylistic discriminants of good and poor writing at the tenth-grade level; the use of syntactic punctuation in student writing in grades eight, ten, and twelve; causes of failure to learn to write; psychological and stylistic correlates of writing behavior; the needs and concepts of individual students in a post-secondary remedial writing program; a case study of remedial writers in selected two-year colleges; and the relationship between reading achievement and writing achievement among college freshmen. (GW)

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Written Language and Writing Abilities:

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Abstracts of the following dissertations are included in this collection:

Brozick, James Richard

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE COMPOSING PROCESS OF FOUR TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS: CASE STUDIES BASED ON JUNG'S PERSONALITY TYPES, FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC EGO PSYCHOLOGY AND COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING

Gebhard, Ann O'Connell

THE RELATIONSHIP OF WRITING QUALITY TO SYNTAX: A TRANSFORMATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THREE PROSE SAMPLES

Heil, Helen F.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELECTED LANGUAGE VARIABLES IN TWO MODES OF WRITING AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO READING COMPREHENSION IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Johnson, Miriam Jean

FACTORS OF STYLE IN PROSE FOR CHILDREN

Koch, Susan Jane

THE INTERESTS AND CONCERNS OF ADOLESCENTS, GRADES SEVEN THROUGH TWELVE, AS EXPRESSED IN THEIR WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Kramer, Howard William

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TYPE AND ACHIEVEMENT IN EXPOSITORY AND CREATIVE WRITING

Kroll, Barry Meredith

COGNITIVE EGOCENTRISM AND WRITTEN DISCOURSE

Leonard, Beverley Estelle Dildine

STYLISTIC DISCRIMINATES OF GOOD AND POOR WRITING AT TENTH GRADE LEVEL

May, Angelita Mason

SYNTACTIC PUNCTUATION AND SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY IN THE WRITING OF CERTAIN STUDENTS IN GRADES EIGHT, TEN, AND TWELVE

Metzger, Elizabeth Ann

CAUSES OF FAILURE TO LEARN TO WRITE: EXPLORATORY CASE STUDIES AT GRADE SEVEN, GRADE TEN, AND COLLEGE LEVEL

Ruffner, Michael Ross

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND STYLISTIC CORRELATES OF WRITTEN ENCODING BEHAVIOR

Silva, Clare M.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE NEEDS AND CONCEPTS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS IN A POST-SECONDARY REMEDIAL WRITING PROGRAM

Stiles, Eleanor Elizabeth Reynolds

A CASE STUDY OF REMEDIAL WRITERS IN SELECTED TWO-YEAR COLLEGES IN EAST TENNESSEE

Thomas, Freddy LaVal

THE EXTENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING ACHIEVEMENT AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENT AMONG COLLEGE FRESHMEN

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE COMPOSING PROCESS OF FOUR TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS: CASE STUDIES BASED ON JUNG'S PERSONALITY TYPES, FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYTIC EGO PSYCHOLOGY AND COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING

BROZICK, James Richard, Ph.D.
University of Pittsburgh, 1976

This investigation sought to produce a profile of the composing behaviors and the use of cognitive strategies in written composition for each of four twelfth grade students of "distinct" personality type. The need for this study became apparent after examining the limited number of investigations into the composing process and after examining the implications for written composition in the findings of related research in the fields of psychology, fantasy and reading.

The problem was to provide a descriptive profile of four student's composing processes based on the students' personality profiles, on interviews dealing with their composing behaviors, and especially on the use of cognitive strategies employed in written composition; to describe the inter-relationship between personality type and cognitive functioning in both expressive-reflexive and expressive-extensive writing; and to determine how the inter-relationship between personality type and cognitive functioning affects the prewriting, planning, reformulation, and evaluation behaviors of the selected students.

The subjects of this research were four twelfth grade students enrolled in an Honors English program in a suburban high school. Based on results from the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the researcher identified four distinctly different students for investigation: one student identified as sensing-feeling, one student identified as sensing-thinking, one student identified as intuitive-feeling, and one student identified as intuitive-thinking. Further information on personality for each of the specific subjects was obtained by administering the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

Each student wrote four themes as a member of his/her English class. The themes followed the reading of selected literary works. Two themes were characterized as "reflexive" and two themes were characterized as "extensive." After each writing assignment, the researcher interviewed each of the four students regarding his/her composing behaviors and use of focus, contrast, classification, sequence, change and physical context. The analysis of cognitive strategies was based on the work of Young, Becker and Pike, authors of Rhetoric: Discovery and Change.

The investigation produced these findings: (1) The composing behaviors for reflexive and extensive writing of the four students differed markedly, based upon the student's purpose, audience, and personality style. (2) Classroom writing behaviors appear in part to be a function of previous and current student-teacher interaction. (3) To a large extent the nature of the assignment governs the planning behaviors and the sense of closure that the student gets when he/she writes. (4) The student's personality style, purpose and sense of audience govern the choices the writer makes in regard to sequence, focus, classification, contrast, change and physical context. (5) The student's choice of topic in reflexive writing is influenced by his identity theme. (6) The student's composing processes and use of cognitive strategies are a function of his identity theme; that is, he assimilates information and accommodates to internal and external realities to meet the demands of the assignment. (7) Extensive writing restricts the student's planning behaviors and use of certain cognitive strategies. (8) Reflexive writing provides the greatest opportunity for the student to explore his/her own needs and interests.

From this investigation the composing process emerges as a dynamic process subject to many variables and influences. Order No. 77-15,206, 218 pages.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF WRITING QUALITY TO SYNTAX: A TRANSFORMATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THREE PROSE SAMPLES

GEBHARD, Ann O'Connell, Ph.D.
Syracuse University, 1976

Based on the assumption that written prose is a special dialect of English, this study attempted to assess whether syntactic structures utilized in freshman expository exposition rated "good" differed from those in freshman exposition rated "poor." It further sought to investigate in what ways the dialect as used by both groups of freshmen differed from, or was similar to, that employed in contemporary magazine articles by professional writers, whose work presumably affords a model of the dialect.

Approximately five hundred college freshmen wrote in-class themes on a common topic. Three separate, sequential ratings, including an evaluation by the students' regular composition instructors, established two contrastive samples of 10,000 words each. To provide a professional sample of similar size, excerpts of 400 words were randomly selected from each of the twenty-five articles appearing on "A Standard Corpus of Contemporary Expository Essays" compiled by Margaret Ashida.

The prose of the three samples was segmented into T-units using a procedure recommended by Hunt. Each T-unit was analyzed in terms of an 86 item data sheet. Included in the analysis were fluency and density measures, patterns of T-unit structure, types of sentence openers and sentence-combining transformations, and the position in sentence of loose modification.

The data were processed by a computer program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SSPS). A T-test was used to compare the means of fluency and density measures. Chi-square was used to compare proportions of all other variables analyzed.

Comparison of the three writing samples indicated that the differences between the two quality-rated freshmen groups and between both groups of freshmen and the professional writers are generally not differences in the choice of syntactic structures but rather in the utilization of structures. It was also apparent that the two freshmen groups resembled each other more than either one resembled the professional.

In terms of the theory that written prose is a special dialect of English, the poorer freshmen's failure to internalize the dialect manifested itself in their methods of beginning sentences and expanding base nominals, their generally low ranking on fluency and density measures, and their handling of loose modification.

The variable which discriminated most consistently and profoundly among the three groups was the mean number of words per sentence-combining transformation, a measure reflecting syntactical density.

Both professional and good freshman writers demonstrate superior ability in using deletion transformations. For this reason, mean T-unit length, an established indicator of developmental maturity, appears to have limited value as a measure of writing quality. Order No. 77-9855, 140 pages.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELECTED LANGUAGE VARIABLES IN TWO MODES OF WRITING AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO READING COMPREHENSION IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

HEIL, Helen F., Ph.D.
Hofstra University, 1976

The major purposes of this study were: (1) to examine selected written language variables in the writing of children for developmental trends; (2) to examine the differences, if any, in the syntactic characteristics of two kinds of writing, narrative and expository, of children in grades one through three; and (3) to determine which written language variables, or combinations thereof, appear related to reading comprehension in grades one, two, and three.

Seven written language variables were involved in the four general hypotheses generated in this study: (1) mean length of t-unit; (2) ratio of the number of nominal embedding transformations to the total number of t-units; (3) ratio of the number of relative embedding transformations to the total number of t-units; (4) ratio of the number of nominal and relative embedding transformations to the total number of t-units; (5) ratio of the number of sentence-combining transformations to the total number of t-units; (6) ratio of the number of t-units containing none of the aforementioned transformations (k-structures), to the total number of t-units; and (7) ratio of clauses to t-unit.

It was hypothesized that (1) there are significant differences among the subjects in the written language variables in narrative and expository writing; (2) there are significant differences between expository and narrative writing in the written language variables; (3) there is a relationship between level of reading comprehension as measured by the comprehension subtest of the Stanford Achievement Test and the language variables; and (4) there is a relationship between reading comprehension as measured by an informal cloze procedure and the language variables.

The subjects of the study were 150 students drawn from the first, second, and third grades of a primary school in Garden City, New York.

The Stanford Achievement Test (Comprehension Subtest) was administered as one measure of comprehension. Cloze tests were used as the second measure.

Written language samples of two kinds, narrative and expository were obtained from each subject. These were segmented into t-units and subjected to a detailed syntactic analysis based on the principles of transformational grammar. Sentence-combining transformations were classified as follows: nominal embeddings, which included noun clauses and noun phrases; relative embeddings, which included relative clauses, phrases and words; nonclausal adverbial constructions; and intra-t-unit coordinations.

The differences among grade levels were tested with one-way analysis of variance tests. The differences between narrative and expository writing were examined with t-tests. The relationships between the written language variables and the two measures of comprehension were tested with multiple stepwise regressions.

Pertinent findings included: 1. Significant differences were found between grades one and two in most of the language variables for both narrative and expository writing, while no significant differences were found between grades two and three. 2. In grade one, narrative writing was found to be significantly different from expository writing in all but one of the measures, while in grades two and three the two modes were different in all seven measures. 3. Except in the third grade, significant correlations were found between most of the single language variables and the two measures of comprehension. However, when combined, the seven language variables contributed significantly to comprehension only in the second grade.

Conclusions from the study included: 1. It appears to be feasible to examine the writing of primary children using techniques based on transformational grammar. 2. There appears to be a period of rapid development in written language which starts soon after the beginning of school to the end of second grade. 3. Primary children appear to write differently in the narrative mode than in exposition. 4. Primary children who are better able to manipulate the syntactic structures under investigation are those who do better in reading comprehension. Order No. 77-13,727, 279 pages.

FACTORS OF STYLE IN PROSE FOR CHILDREN

JOHNSON, Miriam Jean, Ph.D.
Boston College, 1977

Director: Dr. John F. Savage

Problem

The purpose of this study was to identify the main variations that occur when language is manipulated consciously for special effects by authors of prose for children. Stated in terms of a question, this study was addressed to the problem, "What are the basic dimensions in which literary styles of authors of prose for children vary?"

Having identified five stylistic elements, the investigator used these factors to develop style profiles of five distinguished authors of prose for children, and included a guide that will enable elementary school teachers and children to analyze the style of each of these authors.

Sources of Data

The sample of prose studied consisted of 150 passages randomly selected from various sources and styles of prose for children. Each passage was chosen so as to be more or less self-contained within 300 words. By selecting passages according to many different categories the investigator attempted to include the widest possible assortment of subject matter and styles for a clearly heterogeneous sample.

The measures taken on these 150 passages fell into two classes of independent variables: subjective and objective measures. The subjective measures consisted of a continuum of descriptors; e.g., vivid-pale, interesting-boring, serious-humorous, etc. The objective measures involved various counts, indices, and ratios based on the enumeration of certain classes of words, clauses, sentences, and other linguistic entities; e.g., the number of sentences, the mean of sentence length, proportion of adjectival clauses, etc.

Five judges having expertise in children's literature rated the objective measures on a seven-point scale. The five judgments obtained for each passage on each scale were then averaged. The data for the objective measures were gathered by an undergraduate student of languages.

Methods and Procedures

Fifty scores were obtained for each of the 150 passages: the twenty-five averaged ratings of the five judges and the twenty-five objective measures. The resulting 50 x 150 scores formed the basis for the statistical analysis. The correlation of each measure with each other measure was determined with the result being a correlation matrix with fifty rows and fifty columns. This correlation matrix was then subjected to a factor analysis in which the first step was to extract initial factors. This step was followed by rotation to terminal factors in order to determine how many fundamental dimensions would be needed, at a minimum, to account for all the interrelations among the fifty measures.

These identified dimensions or factors served as the basis for a typology of style of five authors for children. These style profiles were constructed by plotting the data derived from five randomly selected passages of 300 words of each author's work on a continuum of the factors identified in the study. The factor scores were used in plotting the styles of E. L. Konigsburg, Robert McCloskey, A. A. Milne, E. B. White, and Laura Ingalls Wilder.

These profiles of the authors' styles are accompanied by a curriculum guide containing background information concerning the author, an analysis of style with illustrative selections from the authors' works, and suggestions to evoke oral and written reactions from the children.

Major Findings and Conclusions

The results of the factor analysis technique in the study support the following major conclusions: The basic dimensions or factors in which literary styles of authors of prose for children vary are General Stylistic Evaluation, Seriousness, Complexity, Abstractness, and Narration versus Characterization.

An analysis of the works of the five selected authors demonstrates that these factors identified in the study do, in fact, account for the variations seen in the distinctive style of each author. There may never be a system for the complete understanding of all the nuances of style, but the identified factors illustrate in a contrasting way some variations that occur when language is manipulated consciously by authors of prose for children. Order No. 77-8677, 161 pages.

THE INTERESTS AND CONCERNS OF ADOLESCENTS, GRADES SEVEN THROUGH TWELVE, AS EXPRESSED IN THEIR WRITTEN COMPOSITION

KOCH, Susan Jane, Ph.D.
Michigan State University, 1976

The purpose of this study was to investigate the writing interests and concerns of secondary school students according to both the topics they chose and the audiences to whom they addressed their writing. To elicit student writing which called for a conscious choice of an audience and which allowed for a wide range of possible subjects, a letter format was developed. Students participating in the study were given a list of possible audiences, ranging from personal and known audiences to impersonal, unknown, and imaginative audiences; in addition, they were given a list of topics ranging from personal feelings and experiences to abstract, imaginative, and issue-oriented subjects. Students were asked to write a letter to an audience taken from the first list about a subject taken from the second list.

Two sets of categories were developed from the writings of the students, providing a two-dimensional view of each piece of writing. The first set, Audience, includes seven categories: Self, Family, Peers, Known Adults, Public Figures, Imaginary Being, and Other. The second set, Subject, includes eight categories: Personal Feelings; Past Personal Experience; Recent Personal Experience; Future Personal Experience; Goals; Ideas, Opinions, Theories; Imaginary Situations; and Other. The cross tabulation of audience and subject by grade and by sex reveals an almost total dominance in the girls' selections of writing to Peers about either Personal Experience or Personal Feelings. The only exception is in twelfth grade where girls write to Family about Personal Feelings. The top two cross-tabulated subject-audience categories (with the exception of seventh grade) account for 32% to 45% of girls' total writings, emphasizing the dominance of those particular categories.

Boys' writing reveals much more diversity in choices of subject and audience than does the girls'. Though the expression of Personal Feelings is one of the top two choices at every grade level for the boys, the percentages of letters written about feelings are much lower than the same topics for girls; in addition, the audiences to whom boys express Personal Feelings are much more diverse, including Public Figures and Known Adults, as well as Peers. In addition, the top cross-tabulated choices show a greater variety of kinds of writing including letters to Imaginary Beings about Imaginary Situations, and letters to Known Adults and Public Figures about Ideas, Opinions, and Theories, none of which appear in the girls' top choices.

A second chapter focusing on the letters written by the students explores ways in which language functions for the writer to describe, define, and understand experience. In this chapter, entire letters are reproduced which present a picture of adolescents under various sub-topics: Adolescents and Feelings, Adolescents and Experiences, Adolescents and Ideas, Adolescents and Imagination, and Adolescents and "The Child I May Have Someday." The discussion of the letters centers on the complexity and diversity of the adolescent world and the ways in which adolescents use their writing to understand and cope with that world. In addition, the various voices that adolescents use and the flexibility of their language according to their audience and the purpose of the composition is described.

On the basis of this study, several conclusions were drawn: 1. Boys appear to be interested in writing to a much more diverse audience about a much wider variety of subjects than girls. 2. Both boys and girls show interest in writing about how they feel, and appear to use writing to deal with experience and feelings as a means of understanding them better. 3. Both boys and girls are interested in addressing their writings with peers; in sharing experiences, ideas, and feelings with their friends through the written medium. 4. While students show interest in writing to friends, they also write to many other types of audiences. The audience they choose to write to, as well as the subject chosen, affects the voice, tone, and style of the letter. 5. Most important, this study does not support the notion that there is a movement from personal and concrete writing to impersonal and abstract writing as students mature. Students at all grade levels show an interest in writing about a variety of topics that include both the personal and the impersonal, the concrete and the abstract.

Order No. 77-11,664, 258 pages.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TYPE AND ACHIEVEMENT IN EXPOSITORY AND CREATIVE WRITING

KRAMER, Howard William, Ph.D.
The University of Michigan, 1977

Chairman: Charles F. Lehmann

It was the purpose of this study to uncover possible relationships between selected personality types (according to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) and (1) achievement in English Composition at Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, (2) achievement in expository writing at the College of All Saints, London, England, and (3) participation in creative writing groups and classes at Concordia College and The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The following hypotheses were tested in the study: 1. The introverted student, according to the MBTI, will achieve a higher course grade in English Composition at Concordia College; 2. Students at Concordia College and The University of Michigan who become involved with groups or classes regularly producing creative writing will include a significantly larger number of introverts than would be expected by chance; 3. The Intuitive-Feeling (NF) student, as measured by the MBTI, will achieve significantly higher grades in English Composition at Concordia College; 4. Students at Concordia College and The University of Michigan who become involved with groups or classes regularly producing creative writing will include a significantly larger number of Intuitive-Feeling (NF) types than would be expected by chance; 5. The introverted student, according to the MBTI, will achieve significantly higher grades in expository writing at the College of All Saints; 6. The Intuitive-Feeling (NF) student, according to the MBTI, will achieve significantly higher grades in expository writing at the College of All Saints.

The samples included 548 expository writing students at Concordia College, forty expository writing students at the College of All Saints, fifty-eight creative writing students at Concordia College, and seventeen creative writing students at The University of Michigan. Form E of the MBTI was used with all subjects. A and B were considered higher grades in expository writing; C, D, and F were treated as the lower grades.

Hypotheses One and Five were completely unsupported; the other hypotheses were partially supported. The findings may be summarized as follows: 1. Introversion, as measured by the MBTI, is not associated with higher achievement in expository writing at Concordia College or at the College of All Saints (Whether or not Extraversion may be associated with higher achievement in college freshman expository writing classes, should receive further study); 2. Introversion, as measured by the MBTI, appears to be associated with interest and achievement in creative writing; 3. The Intuitive (N) personality variable, as measured by the MBTI, appears to be associated with higher achievement in expository writing and with interest and achievement in creative writing; 4. The better expository writer is one who combines the Thinking (T) and/or Judging (J) variable, as measured by the MBTI, with the Intuitive (N); 5. Creative writers apparently combine the Thinking (T) and/or Perceptive (P) variable, as measured by the MBTI, with the Intuitive (N); and 6. The higher achieving British expository writing students are not, apparently, basically different from higher achieving American expository writing students in personality type, as measured by the MBTI.

The study intended to offer its findings for the use of college advisers, counselors and instructors in their dealings with students. The following conclusions may be drawn: 1. Advisers, counselors and instructors should not expect a significantly different level of achievement in expository writing from introverted as opposed to extraverted students; 2. Students who base judgments on impersonal analysis and logic and who like a planned, decided, orderly way of life while they look for possibilities and relationships will probably achieve the higher grades in expository writing; and 3. Somewhat introverted students who base judgments on impersonal analysis and logic while looking for possibilities and relationships, and preferring a flexible, spontaneous way of life will more often show an interest and achievement in creative writing.

Order No. 77-26,283, 227 pages.

COGNITIVE EGOCENTRISM AND WRITTEN DISCOURSE

KROLL, Barry Meredith, Ph.D.
The University of Michigan, 1977

Chairman: James W. Downer

The compositions of many beginning writers reflect a self-orientation, an inability to adapt messages for the needs of a reader. This dissertation linked two lines of inquiry in an investigation of the writer's self-orientation. One line of thought was rhetoric. I explored the traditional concept of "audience awareness" as a background to the problem of the writer's limited perspective. Although rhetoric contributes a useful definition of the problem, it has little to say about the processes involved when a writer attempts to take his reader's point of view. The other line of inquiry was cognitive-developmental psychology. A substantial portion of the dissertation explored the concept "cognitive egocentrism" as a basis for understanding writing which is poorly adapted to an audience. Egocentrism theory promises to explicate the psychological processes involved in "audience awareness"; however, empirical evidence for the role of egocentrism in writing is lacking.

Hence, this research explored the manifestation of egocentrism in fourth-grade children's spoken and written messages. The hypothesis was that the children's spoken discourse would be less egocentric than their written discourse. In the experiment, the children learned to play a competitive board game, and then were asked to explain the game. During the first phase of the experiment, one group of eighteen children (Group A) wrote their explanations, while another group of eighteen children (Group B) spoke their explanations. The messages were scored for the amount of information conveyed. The underlying assumption was that egocentrism would result in a lack of awareness of what another needed to know to play the game, and hence in the omission of necessary information. Thus, low scores indexed high communicative egocentrism. Approximately two weeks after the first phase, the children returned for phase two, which involved a second informative message about the game -- in whichever mode they had not used during the first phase (Group A spoke, Group B wrote).

The mean information score for all spoken explanations was, as hypothesized, significantly higher than the mean score for written explanations ($\underline{t} = 2.54$, $p < 0.01$; one-tailed test). However, further analysis indicated that speaking was superior to writing only in phase one, during the first message construction. For phase one, the mean score for Group B (which spoke the explanation) was significantly higher than the mean score for Group A ($\underline{t} = 2.4$, $p < 0.01$; one-tailed test). During phase two the mean scores for spoken and written messages were nearly identical.

Thus, there is evidence that, for the young writer, the act of writing creates greater egocentric obstacles to communication than speaking, although practice in message construction makes writing and speaking nearly equal in information value.

Egocentrism theory offers an important psychological basis for the rhetorical concept of "audience awareness." Further research is warranted both to identify the cognitive components of egocentrism in written discourse, and to explore the pedagogical import of egocentrism theory.

Order No. 77-26,284, 272 pages.

STYLISTIC DISCRIMINATES OF GOOD AND POOR WRITING AT TENTH GRADE LEVEL

LEONARD, Beverley Estelle Dildine, Ph.D.
University of Washington, 1977

Chairperson: Dianne Monson

The purpose of this study was to examine writing samples from tenth grade students evaluated as having desirable writing style and tenth grade students evaluated as having undesirable writing style to determine which elements within their writing might account for its being judged desirable or undesirable.

Elements selected as variables were those found by previous researchers to have a significantly greater or lesser incidence in the writing of various age groups. One hypothesis tested the ability of clause length to discriminate between the writing of good and poor writers. A second hypothesis consisted of several sub-hypotheses which tested the discriminating ability of the following: T-unit length, within T-unit incidence and word count of free modifiers, and within T-unit incidence and word count of coordinate elements. A third hypothesis tested within-clause incidence of adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases, and coordinates.

Subjects were thirty good writers and thirty poor writers selected from the tenth grade population of a suburban Seattle high school. Initial selection was based on standardized language ability test scores. Sample paragraphs from 65 students scoring above 80% on the test and 52 students scoring below 30% were given to raters. The thirty students whose paragraphs received the highest rating and the thirty students whose paragraphs received the lowest rating were subjects in the study.

Paragraphs from the selected subjects were analyzed to determine clause and T-unit lengths. Incidences of other variables were counted and scaled in terms of total words written. For each variable, the mean incidence of occurrence for good writers and the mean incidence of occurrence for poor writers were compared through a T-test to determine whether a significant difference did exist. In a second statistical procedure, Stepwise Discriminant Analysis was performed to test the relative ability of the variables to predict group membership. A longitudinal dimension was added to the study through two further sets of paragraphs from six of the best and six of the poorest writers.

Of the fifteen variables considered, only two, the number of free modifiers used in a final position and the total number of free modifiers used in all positions, reached the .05 level of confidence adopted for this study. Good writers used significantly more of both. There was also some evidence that good writers use more intra T-unit coordination. The longitudinal data suggested that severely disabled writers tend to use very short clauses.

It was concluded that the use of free modifiers is an important discriminate of expository tenth grade writing that is judged to be successful. T-unit length, found in previous studies to correlate with age group, did not discriminate between good and poor tenth grade writing. It was suggested that replication of this study at other grade levels and in descriptive and narrative modes of writing would be desirable to test the universality of findings from this study.

Order No. 77-26,842, 97 pages.

SYNTACTIC PUNCTUATION AND SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY IN THE WRITING OF CERTAIN STUDENTS IN GRADES EIGHT, TEN, AND TWELVE

MAY, Angelita Mason, Ed.D.
Temple University, 1977

The major purpose of the study was to examine the use of syntactic punctuation in the writing of students in grades eight, ten, and twelve. It examined the use of structures requiring the punctuation and the accuracy with which the structures were punctuated by students at each grade level. A second purpose was to develop a method for diagnosing problems of syntactic punctuation in the writing of students and planning sequential teaching strategies for punctuation and composition instruction.

The ninety students who participated in the study attended two Philadelphia public schools, a middle-magnet school and a vocational-technical senior high. Classes were selected by the faculty member responsible for the English program in each school. Selection was made solely on the basis of the students' designation as "average" within their individual schools.

All of the students received four writing assignments, topics set by the investigator to elicit responses in three modes: argumentation, narration, and description. Each classroom English teacher administered the assignments, in accordance with written instructions from the investigator, over a four-week period at the end of the 1976 school year.

Thirty T-units each from thirty students in each grade, or a total of 2700 T-units were the source of the data examined. A syntactic punctuation usage profile sheet was devised by the investigator for recording punctuation usages found in compositions.

Overall, the students appropriately joined 72 per cent of their T-units, and they realized 37 per cent of their potentials for appropriate syntactic punctuation within T-units. Other significant findings include: 1. There is no significant difference in the amount of appropriate syntactic punctuation used either between T-units or within T-units by eighth grade students and that used by twelfth grade students. 2. Tenth grade students use significantly less appropriate syntactic punctuation between T-units and within T-units than either eighth graders or twelfth graders. 3. The writing of twelfth graders evidence the greatest syntactic complexity and the most versatility in use of syntactic punctuation. 4. The writing of tenth graders evidences the greatest experimentation with syntactic complexity and the least control of or versatility in the use of syntactic punctuation. 5. At all three grade levels, students use syntactic punctuation within T-units with far less proficiency than they use it between T-units. 6. At no grade level are students proficient at using commas, except for punctuating items in a series. 7. The syntactic punctuation usage profile sheet was found to be a useful instrument for diagnosing punctuation usage strengths and weaknesses in students' written composition.

Order No. 77-21,774, 74 pages.

CAUSES OF FAILURE TO LEARN TO WRITE: EXPLORATORY CASE STUDIES AT GRADE SEVEN, GRADE TEN, AND COLLEGE LEVEL

METZGER, Elizabeth Ann, Ph.D.
State University of New York at Buffalo, 1977

The Problem

The purpose of the study is to explore the causes of failure to learn to write of two college and four secondary working-class students from Buffalo or a satellite community.

The study seeks to answer these questions through case study methodology: 1) What are the composing process and writing behavior of the poor writer? 2) What features characterize the poor writer's written products? 3) What is the poor writer's writing history? 4) What role do curriculum and teachers play in writing failure?

In light of the recent national and local concern about the poor writing skills among students, the questions of the study seemed timely and pertinent. Review of the literature revealed that no studies had investigated through case study methodology the composing process of poor writers.

The Procedure

In brief this study (1) gathered data from six students using case study methodology, (2) interviewed and observed students in informal situations while they wrote in order to examine their composing process and writing behavior, (3) analyzed the students' written products using a special instrument, (4) developed writing biographies on each student, (5) interviewed parents about their experiences with and opinions of writing and for other relevant school and personal data and (6) ascertained the nature of writing instruction in the schools by interviewing teachers and examining curriculum guides.

The Findings

Generally, students did not prewrite before the interviews, used no formal written plans, started with ease in personal narratives, interpreted reformulation as recopying to make the piece legible and neater, stopped with no discernible display of emotion except relief that they had completed the task, and did not evaluate their writing products.

The characteristics of the writing products were syntactic immaturity, inconsistent tense and mood, awkward introductions, inappropriate diction, poor organization and development, redundancy, lack of coherence and transition, and deviations from standard English usage.

The students' writing biographies showed that they had received very little or no instruction in writing. If students had received instruction in writing, teachers had disproportionately emphasized mechanics and usage at the expense of other areas.

The non-teaching of writing was unintentional and intentional. Some teachers were discouraged from teaching writing by large classes, heavy teaching loads, unruly students, and a lack of training in the fundamentals of writing; other teachers circumvented teaching writing because they found it easier to assign exercises and grade objective tests than pieces of writing.

The K-12 composition curriculum was remiss in encouraging activities with single sentences or short paragraphs up to Grade 10 and did not provide guidance for multigraphed writing for Grades K-9. Inadvertently, the curriculum condoned the non-teaching of extended writing until late in students' lives, high school. In addition, the language arts curriculum was multi-faceted and, besides writing, encompassed listening and speaking, literature, reading, and language; writing occupied a small segment in a curriculum that encouraged the teaching of many skills. Writing was not a skill given priority over the others.

Conclusions

In spite of poor teaching, students have learned something about writing, evidenced in their ability to reproduce speech, describe people, use figurative language, and write in a variety of modes. Although flawed by deviations from standard English usage, many pieces in this study were poignant and relatively well written: the pieces dispel any beliefs that these students are unable to write but rather support the claim that they are unmotivated to write. Given stimuli and conditions conducive to writing, they produce writing that shows promise, but their teachers seem to have overlooked it. Poor writers have been thwarted in their development as writers. They are casualties of inner-city schools.

All the blame for writing failure does not rest with overworked or poorly trained public school teachers. Students, administrators, and college teachers are partially responsible, too. Students sometimes make teaching an unpleasant task; the promotion of students who lack basic skills distresses administrators who seem powerless to reverse the trend; college English teachers prefer to teach literature rather than composition and consciously and unconsciously resist teaching it.

Order No. 77-27,502, 480 pages.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND STYLISTIC CORRELATES OF WRITTEN ENCODING BEHAVIOR

RUFFNER, Michael Ross, Ph.D.
The University of Florida, 1976

Chairman: Michael Burgoon

Research has generally demonstrated that the psychological state of the encoder will affect both the style and the impact of a given communication message. However, there have been few attempts to specify the exact nature of the relationship between message style and psychological state in written encoding. The research objectives of this investigation were as follows: (1) to determine both the independent and conjoint effects of stylistic, psychological, and demographic variables on written message production; (2) to develop a method of predicting effective written encoding behavior through multiple regression analysis employing psychological predisposition, written style, and demographic variables as criterion measures; and (3) to suggest a screening instrument for assessing the potential writing ability of applicants in various academic disciplines.

Stepwise multiple regression analyses were employed to generate regression equations predicting performance on the two criterion measures of writing style and final grade. Standardized OPI scores were used to predict performance on eight separate stylistic indices. In addition, OPI standardized scores, eight stylistic indices, and a combination of both sets of variables were employed as predictors of final grade in an advanced writing course.

The findings indicated that stylistic, psychological, and demographic variables have measurable effects on a number of criterion measures including written message production and the effectiveness of written encoding. Regression models

were obtained which provided the best psychological, stylistic, and demographic predictors of both written style and effectiveness of written encoding. The regression models accounted for as much as 56 percent of the variance in the criterion measures.

Findings were discussed in terms of the predictive ability of the models and the potential application of these models as screening measures. A number of research extensions, suggested by the findings of this investigation, were discussed.

Order No. 77-17,053, 85 pages.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE NEEDS AND CONCEPTS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS IN A POST-SECONDARY REMEDIAL WRITING PROGRAM

SILVA, Clare M., Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1977

Adviser: Professor Donald R. Bateman

The findings of this study support the assumptions underlying an instructional approach which perceives and works with individual differences in basic writing program. Recognition of the great range of differentiation among individual writing performances makes it obvious that it is a waste of time and endeavor for all remedial writing students to "study" the same material. Apart from the fact that different people learn at a different pace or in a different manner, students in remedial writing programs do not need to learn the same things. Although they are in a remedial writing program because they are not on a par with students who are considered to be ready for traditional post-secondary composition classes, nevertheless these students with problems are all at different points on a broad-based continuum representing skill in writing--all below the point where post-secondary writing classes traditionally begin, but each one at his or her particular stage of development in the acquisition of basic writing skills.

The research for the study was conducted in Autumn Quarter 1976. The placement test writing samples of 97 first-year students at Columbus Technical Institute were examined for errors in writing mechanics, and the results of the analysis were tabulated. Dominant error patterns were sought, and the students categorized according to the kind of errors (spelling, word choice, and punctuation) predominant in their writing; other variables that were looked at in conjunction with the written samples were the words per error ratios, length of the written samples, subjective evaluations (with regard to matters of style and organization), and sentence length. Thirty-two categories of remedial writers resulted from taking a crosscut of dominant error patterns and words per error ratios, with the largest set containing seven students. Differences among students at this level of analysis are pointed out and commented on.

A further step in the study was to tabulate the responses to a 40-item objective test which probed for the students' recognition of error in spelling, word choice, and punctuation, as well as their evaluations and interpretations of their own writing performances, of writing generally, and of their needs within a writing program. A computer analysis generated crosstabulations and breakdowns of the correlations between the students' performances on the objective test and the written sample. The results of this analysis are looked at and discussed.

Although the findings were principally in terms of individual similarities and differences, there was considerable fallout regarding general group characteristics. It was found, for example, that the students who wrote at greater length generally made fewer errors proportionally, had more positive subjective evaluations, and had more correct and positive responses on the objective test. Furthermore, the students who had proportionally fewer errors in the written sample were those who showed error patterns with the least amount of differentiation among the error counts in the three basic categories of writing mechanics (spelling, word choice, and punctuation).

A copy of the objective test, the responses to the objective test, typed copies of the marked and tabulated written samples, and Xerox-reduced copies of the printouts of the computer analysis are appended to the study.

Order No. 77-24,704, 388 pages.

A CASE STUDY OF REMEDIAL WRITERS IN SELECTED TWO-YEAR COLLEGES IN EAST TENNESSEE

STILES, Eleanor Elizabeth Reynolds, Ed.D.
The University of Tennessee, 1976

Major Professor: Mark A. Christiansen

The purpose of this study was to analyze the composing processes and attitudes toward writing of remedial English composition students in selected two-year colleges in East Tennessee. It was felt that such an inquiry could not only provide further insight into the complex, yet little understood, process of composition, but also identify some of the unique problems encountered by adult remedial writers when they engage in composing tasks.

The subjects were four writers from each of two two-year colleges in East Tennessee (N = 8) who had been characterized by their instructors as being seriously deficient in basic writing skills. Each subject met with the investigator on five separate occasions. The first, second, fourth, and fifth meetings were devoted to composing aloud in the presence of a tape recorder. Writing assignments designed to elicit compositions in four modes--narration, description, exposition, and argumentation--were used as stimuli at these four writing sessions. The third meeting consisted of an interview at which the subjects informally discussed their past writing experiences and attitudes toward composition.

An analysis of the tapes yielded the following general findings: 1. The inability to transfer thought to writing was evident in the subjects' composing efforts. Moreover, this difficulty was not limited solely to the encoding of oral discourse, but at times extended to the area of verbal thought, a lower level on the thought-speech-writing continuum. 2. Preoccupation with mechanical amenities, especially spelling, overshadowed awareness of most of the larger aspects of composition. However, almost certainly owing to instructional influence, there was a secondary concern for organization and arrangement. 3. Subjects favored the expository mode for composing and tried to arrange their papers in a tri-partite, expository format, regardless of the nature of the writing task. The second favored mode was the narrative, followed by the descriptive and the argumentative. 4. Although syntactic maturity levels demonstrated by the subjects were generally below those of average twelfth-graders, their linguistic profiles were not consistent across grade level. This inconsistency suggested that while these subjects had developed certain linguistic abilities equal to those of skilled adults, others had lain dormant. 5. The subjects reported that since not much emphasis had been placed

on composition in high school, most of their actual writing experiences and instruction had been confined to the college classroom. Even though they had little confidence in themselves as writers, they maintained positive attitudes toward composition, believing that the ability to write well would be of great personal benefit to them in later life. College English instructors and family members appeared to have played a far greater role in shaping these subjects' attitudes toward writing than peers.

All evidence points to the fact that writing disability at the two-year college level is the result of a myriad of causes which extend backward at least into the early school years and may even predate formal schooling. All subjects displayed serious deficiencies in linguistic and cognitive development which, if not rendering an acceptable level of remediation virtually impossible, would certainly necessitate a long-term program of correction beginning in some cases with the most basic elements of communication. Writing disability is a cumulative effect which, unfortunately for a great number of students, goes largely undiagnosed or ignored until they enter the college freshman English curriculum. It is visionary to assume, as the instructional goals behind many two-year college remedial writing programs do, that such gross deficiencies can be corrected in one term or even one year.

Order No. 77-10,808, 286 pages.

THE EXTENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING ACHIEVEMENT AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENT AMONG COLLEGE FRESHMEN

THOMAS, Freddy LaVal, Ph.D.
University of South Carolina, 1976

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between a student's reading (achievement, amount, and diversity) and his writing achievement. Specifically the investigation was concerned with the following questions: (1) What is the extent of the relationship between reading and writing achievement among college freshmen? (2) What is the extent of the relationship between the amount of reading a college freshman does and his writing achievement? (3) What is the extent of the relationship between the diversity of a college freshman's reading and his writing achievement? (4) What is the extent of the relationship between sentence maturity and the following: reading amount, reading achievement, and reading diversity?

Methods and Procedures

The sample for this study involved 405 college freshman students enrolled in freshman English at a large university serving a metropolitan area in South Carolina.

Five variables were measured in this study: reading achievement, reading amount, reading diversity, overall writing achievement and sentence maturity. The subtests for reading comprehension and vocabulary of the Scholastic Aptitude Test of the College Entrance Examination Board were used to determine the students' reading achievement. The reading questionnaire was used to measure the amount and diversity of the students' reading. The 500-word writing sample was used to measure the overall quality of the students' writing and the sentence maturity found in their writing.

Summary of Findings

1. A correlation of .128, significant at the .028 level of confidence, was found between reading comprehension and writing achievement. 2. A correlation of .063 between writing achievement and vocabulary was found to be nonsignificant. 3. A correlation of .109, significant at the .05 level of confidence, was found between writing achievement and reading achievement. 4. A correlation of .287, significant at the .001 level of confidence, was found between writing achievement and the amount of reading. There was also a correlation of .134 found between writing achievement and diversity of reading, statistically significant at the .021 level. 5. A low positive correlation of .304, significant at the .001 level of confidence, was found to exist between writing achievement and books. 6. The data for the sub-sample showed a correlation of .187, significant at the .03 level of confidence, between sentence maturity and reading comprehension. A correlation of .183, significant at the .03 level of confidence, was found between sentence maturity and reading achievement. For sentence maturity and vocabulary, a correlation of .133 was found, which was not significant at the .05 level of confidence. In addition, a correlation of -.027, not significant at the .05 level of confidence, was found between sentence maturity and the amount of reading; and a correlation of .038, not significant at the .05 level of confidence, was found between sentence maturity and the diversity of reading.

Conclusions

Based on the data presented in this study, the following conclusions were made: 1. The student's ability to read is only negligibly related to his ability to write. 2. The data seem to show that the more reading a student does and the kinds of materials he reads are only slightly related to his writing achievement. Of the six categories used to determine diversity of reading, books seem to me more related to writing achievement than any of the other categories. 3. A negligible relationship appears to exist between the level of sentence maturity found in a student's writing and the student's ability to read. 4. The data seem to show that there is a very little or a negligible relationship between sentence maturity and amount of reading and sentence maturity and diversity of reading.

Order No. 77-6788, 121 pages.

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